agreements/MOUs with Russia, China and Iran in steel sector. These agreements inter-alia include the following issues :

(i) Support & encourage steel enterprises and companies in the steel sector to participate in mutual trade & cooperation.

(ii) Promote exports of raw materials for steel making and finished steel from India.

(iii) Promote the exchange and transfer of improved iron and steel making technologies.

(iv) Exchange information & literature to apprise each other of the developments in the iron & steel industry in both countries.

Supply of forged locomotive wheels by DSP

4516. SHRI SHIBU SOREN : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that SAIL's durgapur unit has obtained an order from Indian Railways for the supply of forged locomotive wheels;

(b) if so, the details of the order;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the Wheels Axle unit of Durgapur Steel plant was upgraded last year for Rs. 142 crore out of its Rs. 4,800 crore technical upgradation project; and

(d) the details of the technical upgradation proposed/made in other subsidiaries of SAIL ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI DILIP RAY) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. locomotive wheels are supplied to Indian Railways as per quarterly allocation, made by Railway Board which are treated as firm orders.

The quarter-wise allocation *vis-a-vis* supplies during 1999-2000 are as follows :—

Period	Allocations (Nos)	Supply (Nos)
Quarter III (Oct-Dec'99)	3200	3190
Quarter IV (Jan-March'2000)	6220	6046

(c) Yes, Sir. The Wheel & Axle Unit of Durgapur Steel Plant was upgraded in Nov'93 at a cost of Rs. 143.66 crores under DSP modernisation project.

(d) There are two subsidiaries of SAIL viz. Indian Iron and Steel Company (IISCO) and Maharashtra Elecktrosmelt Limited (MEL). Twin Hearth technology has been introduced in IISCO. At MEL, no technological upgradation has been made or is proposed at present.

Writing off SAIL Loan

4517. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have been actively considering to write off the loans given to SAIL from the Steel Development Fund ;

(b) if so, the total amount of loans Government propose to write off;

(c) the reasons as to why Government propose to write off such Loans to SAIL;

(d) whether Government have ascertained the causes of accumulation of loans with SAIL; and

(e) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI DILIP RAY) : (a) and (b) Government has approved the waiver of loans along with interest thereon given to SAIL from Steel Development Fund, to a value of Rs. 5073 crore.

(c) The waiver of loans is part of the financial restructuring of SAIL with the objective of improving the financial health of the company and particularly to improve its ability to service debt and raise money for future projects.

(d) and (e) The accumulation of loans was mainly due to market borrowings which were used to fund modernisation of SAIL's steel plants at Durgapur, Rourkela and Bokaro. The total borrowings increased from Rs. 11,272 crores in 1993-94 to Rs. 20,851 crores in 1998-99.

Progress of Steel plant Project in Orissa

4518. SHRI ANANTA SETHI : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :